United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General reports to Security Council on Cyrus Vance's fourth mission to Yugoslavia; urges Governments to respond to appeal made by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for joint humanitarian programme.

- Security Council extends mandate of United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus for further six months term, until 15 June 1992. Council President says in statement following meeting that necessary agreement does not currently exist for change in financing of Force.

- General Assembly takes up law of the sea question; adopts text relating to revitalizing of its work.

- Social Committee ends session's work recommending to Assembly that sufficient resources be ensured for United Nations African Institute for crime prevention.

- European community contributes $16.7 million to United Nations Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for Gaza hospital.

- Committee, meeting in Geneva, asks 1993 World Conference to review possible appointment of High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar yesterday submitted his report to the Security Council on the findings of the fourth mission of his Personal Envoy, Mr. Cyrus Vance, to Yugoslavia which took place from 1 to 9 December.

In his report to the Council, the Secretary-General said the main purpose of Mr. Vance's mission was two-fold: first, to urge the three Yugoslav parties to the Geneva Accords of 23 November to comply fully with the cease-fire agreement; and secondly, to carry forward discussions with the same parties, on an acceptable concept and operational plan for a peace-keeping operation, should the conditions for such an operation be created.

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Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar concluded that the conditions for establishing a United Nations peace-keeping operation in Yugoslavia "still do not exist". While the process of unblocking and withdrawal from Croatia of Yugoslav National Army units was at present proceeding, the unconditional cease-fire remained unimplemented, he said. He noted that a solid basis for the consideration of the establishment of a peace-keeping force had been provided by the Concept Paper describing such a mission.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar stated further in his report that the general situation in Yugoslavia continued to worsen. The crisis in the humanitarian area in particular was deepening, he said. The number of persons displaced by the conflict now exceeded 500,000 and was still increasing. He strongly urged Governments to respond positively to the appeal that had been made on his behalf by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the joint humanitarian programme.

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The Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for a further period of six months, until 15 June 1992.

In adopting resolution 723 (1991) unanimously, the Council took note of the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his report of 30 November and noted further that the Government of Cyprus had agreed that in view of the prevailing conditions on the island it was necessary to keep the Force in Cyprus beyond 15 December.

By the resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to continue his mission of good offices, to keep the Council informed of the progress made and to submit a report on the implementation of the present resolution by 31 May, 1992. It also called on all the parties concerned to continue to cooperate with the Force on the basis of the present mandate.

Following the meeting, Council President Yuliy M. Vorontsov (Soviet Union) read a statement saying that in the light of the discussion at the informal consultations of members of the Council, it was concluded that the necessary agreement did not currently exist in the Council for a decision to be adopted on a change in the financing of UNFICYP. The Members of the Council agreed to keep the issue under urgent review, the statement concluded.

The UNFICYP was established under resolution 186 (1964).

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The General Assembly this morning began considering the Law of the Sea question. Before doing so, it adopted without a vote, a resolution relating to revitalization of the Assembly's work. By its provisions, the Assembly's President and the Secretary-General were invited to undertake consultations to ensure adequate staff and facilities were provided to enable the President to carry out his functions.

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During consideration of the Law of the Sea, Jose Luis Jesus (Cape Verde), Chairman of the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, introduced the draft resolution on the Law of the Sea. The draft, sponsored by 35 countries, would have the Assembly call upon all States to consider ratifying or acceding to the Convention as soon as possible, in order to allow the entry into force of the new legal regime.

The Assembly was expected to take action on the draft this afternoon.

Yesterday, the Assembly welcomed the convening of the peace conference in Madrid on 30 October, while stating that an international conference, under United Nations auspices, with equal participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), would contribute to the promotion of peace in the Middle East.

By its resolution yesterday, the Assembly also reaffirmed five basic principles for the achievement of peace in the Middle East: Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory; security arrangements for all States; resolving the problem of the Palestine refugees; dismantling Israeli settlements in the occupied territories; and guaranteeing freedom of access to Holy Places.

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Concluding its work for the current session, the General Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) has recommended that the Assembly ask the Secretary-General to ensure that sufficient resources were provided within the 1992-1993 budget to the United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.

In a related statement on the financial implications of the draft, the Secretary-General described possible alternative sources of funding for the Institute. The Institute is currently supported by assessed contributions from African States as well as by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Under the terms of another draft approved yesterday, the General Assembly would request the Economic and Social Council to establish a commission on crime prevention and criminal justice as a new functional body of the Council.

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The Commission of the European Communities has decided to contribute some $16.7 million towards the cost of a 232-bed general hospital in the Gaza Strip, where no major hospital construction has taken place since 1967.

Making the announcement in Vienna yesterday, Ilter Turkmen, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), said the pledge came at a critical time, since it will enable UNRWA to provide urgently needed medical services to an under-served population.

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Scheduled to open in autumn 1994, the 232-bed hospital will serve a rapidly increasing Palestinian population, now totalling over 750,000, of whom more than two thirds are Palestine refugees. The UNRWA project will increase by over 20 per cent, the number of hospital beds available to Gaza residents. UNWRA will still have to raise the remaining $15 million of the estimated $35 million needed to staff and operate the hospital for the first three years.

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The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, meeting in Geneva 25 November through 13 December, has recommended the exploration of the establishment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights and the creation of an International Court for Human Rights by the 1993 Berlin World Conference on Human Rights.

The recommendations came as the Committee discussed its contribution to the preparatory process of the World Conference and will be submitted to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference during its second session in the spring of 1992.

Among other recommendations to the Preparatory Committee is a proposal that Member States of the United Nations put the work of the Organization in the field of human rights, in particular the Centre for Human Rights, on a more adequate financial basis.

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